Image courtesy www.hercircle.in (Her circle, 2004)

Mahatma Gandhi — 'A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers.'

Developing a Home Literacy Environment Model for Enhancing Multilingual Skills among Children Aged 3–8 Years in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

Introduction

Languages are much more than communication tools—they encapsulate unique cultures, histories, and ways of thinking. Today, the world is witnessing a severe crisis in linguistic diversity. According to UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages, about 8,324 languages are documented globally, with approximately 7,000 still in use—yet nearly **3,000 (about 43%) are currently classified as endangered** or unsafe (UNESCO, World atlas of languages, 2022). Moreover, around 40% of the estimated 8,324 languages worldwide are at risk of disappearing (Nimdzi, 2021).

This loss is escalating rapidly: linguists estimate that nearly half of today's spoken languages could become extinct by the end of the 21st century (Sabah, 2021) (Guardian, 2021). When a language disappears, it doesn't just vanish as a code of communication—it shuts down ancestral memory, traditional ecological wisdom, oral histories, and locally adapted knowledge systems. The International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) underscores this by aiming to mobilize global efforts to halt this irreversible erosion (UNESCO, 2022). The situation calls for immediate action: documenting, revitalizing, and restoring these languages—or we risk losing irreplaceable threads of collective human identity. The following figure shows the global situation of endangered languages.

Figure 1

Global Endangered Languages

Source: UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger

While every language matters to the individuals speaking, writing, and signing them across the planet, 80% of endangered languages (2,484) exist within just 25 countries. (Jones, 2024)

By 2100, UNESCO believes that half of the world's languages will be extinct**.** 43% of all known languages that exist today are endangered? That's 3,078 languages at risk! **c**

Unfortunately, we have already lost dozens of languages to extinction in this young century**.** (Atomic scribe, 2022)

In short, the current global language crisis can be summarised by the rate of language extinction which is one language every two weeks.

The question that arises is: Why is this alarming?, by 2028, the time the researcher finishes the present research; based on one language lost every two weeks, an estimated 78 languages will already be extinct.

1.1 Asia and Endangered Languages

Asia accounts for 33% of the world's languages. India, Indonesia, and China are the major contributors with 63.57% of all languages are spoken in these three countries. Ethnologue, languages of the world 27th edition identifies 2,341 living languages in Asia out of which a total number of 723 languages are in the endangered list and 133 have already been declared extinct since 1950.

1.2 South East Asia and Endangered Languages

South East Asia consists 11 countries. There are a total no. of 1200 living languages in the region (Ethnolouge Languages of the world (26th edition), 2024) out of which 400 are endangered and approc 30 to 40 already extinct. (UNESCO, World atlas of languages, 2022). Extinct: 40 (approx) (Ethnolouge Languages of the world (26th edition), 2024).

1.3 India And Endangered Languages

Table 1

India's Language Statistics

S. no.	Category	Number of Languages
1	Total languages reported	19,569
2	Languages grouped for administrative purposes	121
3	Major scheduled languages	22
4	Living languages	447
5	Endangered languages	197
6	Critically endangered languages	42
7	Severely endangered languages	81
8	Languages extinct since 1950	15–20

Note. Data adapted from *Language India, States and Union Territories* (Census of India, 2018).

The 2011 census concluded that more than 19,500 languages or dialects are spoken in India as mother tongues, according to the latest analysis there are 121 languages which are spoken by 10,000 or more people in India. (Indian Express, 2018)

1.3.1 Indian Language Crisis: Then and Now

India in 2009:

UNESCO (UNESCO, Atlas of the world's languages in Danger, 2009): Listed India at the very top in terms of endangered languages, with 196 languages classified as endangered.

India in 2017:

Economics Times 2017 listed India as having the highest number of Endangered languages. (Times, freedom@70, 2017)

The table given below highlights the top five countries with the highest number of endangered languages, based on linguistic data in 2017.

India leads globally with 197 endangered languages, reflecting its immense linguistic diversity and many tribal communities.

Table 2

Top five countries with endangered languages

S.no.	Country	No. of endangered languages
1	India	197
2	United States	191
3	Brazil	190
4	China	144
5	Indonesia	143

Source: Economic Times 1 August 2017

India in 2024:

The People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) also notes that out of 780 languages it recorded about 197 languages that are currently endangered and an estimated 220 that have already been lost over the past few decades. (Gautam, 2022)

According to a data-driven breakdown by Visual Capitalist (Captialist, 2024), India has 114 endangered languages, placing it eighth in the world behind Indonesia (425), Papua New Guinea (312), Australia (190), the United States (180), China (133), Nigeria (128), and Mexico (124) endangered languages.

Where India Stands Today

According to UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger,* India has 197 languages that are vulnerable, endangered or extinct making it the country with the highest number of endangered languages. A breakdown based on UNESCO data indicates that

81 languages are vulnerable

63 are definitely endangered

6 are severely endangered

42 are critically endangered

5 already extinct

The 114 or 117 figure refers to Government initiative not the total number of endangered languages specifically, under the Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL) of India.

1.3.2 Indian Languages Heading Towards Extinction

A list prepared by UNESCO has also mentioned about the 42 languages or dialects in India which are endangered and they may be heading towards extinction (Chronicle, 2018)**. 42 endangered languages or dialects** (Today, 2018)**.**

Table 3

Top Five Indian Languages in Endangered Categories Heading Towards Extinction

S. no.	Indian States/ Union Territories	Languages	Languages to be Extinct
1	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	11	Great Andamanese, Jarawa, Lamongse, Luro, Muot, Onge, Pu, Sanenyo, Sentilese, Shompen, Takahanyilang
2	Manipur	7	Aimol, Aka, Koiren, Lamgang, Langrong, Purum, Tarao
3	Himachal Pradesh	4	Baghati, Handuri, Pangvali, Sirmauri
4	Odisha	3	Manda, Parji, Pengo
5	Karnataka	2	Koraga, Kuruba

• Geographical Spread: Endangered languages are found across India—from the Andaman Islands to the Himalayan and Southern states—representing the diversity and fragility of

linguistic heritage.

• Highest Concentration: Andaman and Nicobar Islands has the highest number (11) of endangered languages, all belonging to indigenous communities.

1.4 Himachal Pradesh's Vanishing Voices

In Himachal Pradesh, tucked within the majestic Himalayas, an urgent cultural crisis is unfolding—a silent epidemic of language extinction. According to UNESCO, out of India's approximately 197 endangered languages, **four critically endangered** tongues hail from Himachal: Baghati, Handuri, Pangwali, and Sirmauri. These millets of speech, concentrated in regions like Kullu, Chamba, Sirmaur, Kinnaur, and Spiti, are spoken by only a handful of mostly elderly individuals—children are no longer learning them (Kumar, 2017)

Beyond these, a broader cohort of **Western Pahari languages—including Mandeali, Kinnauri, Churahi, Kangri, and others—are classified by UNESCO as definitely endangered or critically endangered** (Wikipedia, 2025) Many of these languages were once written in the indigenous Tankri script, now all but extinct in everyday use.

Unless immediate, coordinated action is taken, Himachal Pradesh stands to lose not just words, but centuries of collective memory, knowledge systems, and cultural identity.

Shirmau; Tinan, Bharmauri, Chinali, Baghati, Jad, Kanashi, Handuri, Pangvali, Sirmaudi, Mandiyali, Mahasu Pahari, Chambiyali, Bilaspuri are classified by the 2nd International Conference on Social Sciences in The 21st Century (27-29 march 2020) as endangered. (R.K., 2020)

1.5 Multilingualism: Preserving linguistic diversity

Multilingualism, the ability to use and understand more than one language, is a dynamic phenomenon that enriches cognitive, cultural, and social development. It enhances problem-solving skills, creativity, and metalinguistic awareness among children, fostering greater adaptability and cultural sensitivity (Jim, 2000). In early childhood, exposure to multiple languages within the home and community setting supports flexible thinking and strengthens the child's linguistic foundation, enabling smoother acquisition of additional languages (Vygotsky L. , 1978) (Krashen S. , 1982). Promoting multilingualism not only preserves linguistic diversity but also aligns with the principles of the National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2020), which emphasizes the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the foundational years. In the present research multilingualism is seen as a solution for: a) effective learning during the early childhood years and b) as a solution for preserving languages through intergenerational transmission.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model which the study aims to develop draws extensively from the following theories:

Krashen's Input Hypothesis – Sustained access to comprehensible input in each target language is essential for natural acquisition (Krashen, 1985).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory – Early language learning flourishes within socially mediated interactions where caregivers scaffold language within the child's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis – Proficiency in the first language facilitates transfer of skills to additional languages, provided both reach a functional threshold (Cummins, 1979). The theoretical foundation of the HLE Model works on the premise (as shown in the figure) that there is

Rich, meaningful exposure in each language tied to real-life contexts.

Repetition, rehearsal, and retrieval practice to anchor vocabulary and syntax.and

Child-led oral production (storytelling, role-play) to develop fluency and narrative competence.

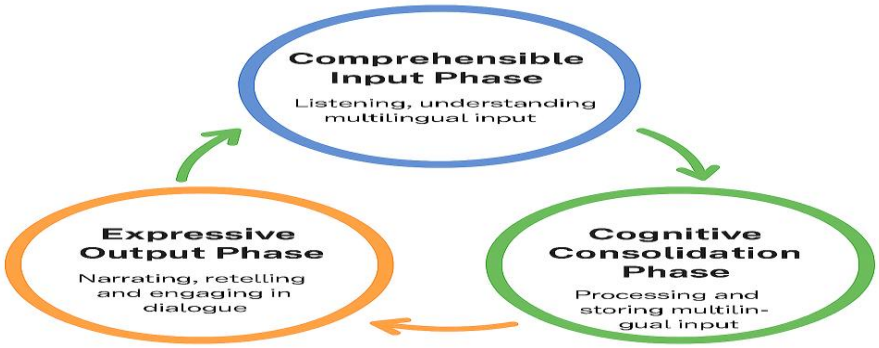
Comprehensible Input Phase
Listening, understanding multilingual input
Cognitive Consolidation Phase
Processing and storing multilin-gual input
Expressive Output Phase
Narrating, retelling and engaging in dialogue

Figure 3

Theoretical foundation of the HLE Model Framework

The above figure represents the phases of multilingual skill acquisition which will be introduced as an HLE model.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present research aims at *Developing A Home Literacy Environment Model for enhancing Multilingual Skills among Children Aged 3-8 years in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh* and studying its effectiveness.

Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh is administratively divided into 19 tehsils and 15 sub-tehsils, totalling 34 subdivisions. The district is also further divided into 16 development blocks and 3908 revenue villages. (MSME, 2011).

It is a multilingual region. Kangri is the native dialect and an off shoot of the Pahari dialect., Hindi is widely spoken and understood and English is the preferred foreign language

Kangri, is considered endangered. While it is spoken by over 1.1 million people, the number of fluent speakers is significantly declining, with many children no longer learning it as their first language. UNESCO classifies it as a "**definitely endangered**" language, **Kangri language** is on International Dashboard of Current UD Languages since May 2021. (Wikipedia, 2022). The native language spoken is commonly referred to as **"Pahari"** by the local population. However, in linguistic classifications and government documents, this language is more specifically identified as **"Kangri."** (*For the purpose of this research, the term **"Kangri (locally referred to as Pahari)"** will be used to maintain clarity, respect local usage, and align with formal documentation).*

3.1 Kangri from Language to Dialect

Table 4

Takri Script Timeline

Period	Event
8^{th}- 9^{th} century	Sharda script in use.
10^{th} -11^{th} century	Takri evolves from Shadra.
14^{th} -15^{th} century	Widely adopted in Himachal Pradesh for administration and literature.
18^{th}-19^{th} century	Peak usage in Himachal Pradesh.
Late 19^{th} century	British introduce Devnagari, Takri declines.
1950	Takri falls out of use.

The endangered '*Tankri'* script, historically used to write Kangri, is now entirely absent from the daily lives of its speakers, further severing ties with their linguistic heritage (Dogra, 2021). The problem becomes more evident as we trace the timeline of the Takri script in which Pahari and Kangri were earlier written(Table 4)

Its decline began with the British introduction of Devanagari, and it became obsolete by 1950.

The research wants to highlight that languages like Kangri are not just systems of words; they embody local knowledge systems, oral histories, ecological wisdom, and collective identity. If Kangri fades, so too will folk songs, proverbs, myths, and traditional expressions that define Kangra's unique cultural landscape.

4. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

4.1 Need of the study

1. UNESCO (2023) indicates that children are no longer learning Kangri as their mother tongue at home. This shift marks the early stages of language attrition, a process that, if not urgently reversed, could lead to irreversible language death within a generation.
2. Kangri is not officially recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, and is often misclassified under Hindi. This lack of institutional support means Kangri is largely absent from education, media, and governance—domains essential for language vitality (Zoller, 2016)
3. The growing intergenerational gap: while elders speak Kangri fluently, younger generations, especially in urban and semi-urban areas of Kangra, increasingly adopt Hindi and English, perceiving them as socially and economically more valuable (Negi S.S. and Sharma R., 2020).
4. With English becoming the *lingua franca* and the language of the 'internet' parents are making a thoughtful endeavour to teach English to their children. The number of English medium schools have been on the rise. In 1986, there was only one private English medium school in Kangra district. Today, the number has increased so significantly that Gagal Khas, a village in Kangra, alone has 59 private English medium schools.
5. Despite the multilingual nature of the region there is no structured support for language development within the home setting. S.S. Negi in the Journal of Languages in India (http://www.languageinindia.com/) highlighted that the linguistic landscape of Himachal Pradesh is dominated by Hindi and English,

leaving little room for structured promotion or preservation of indigenous languages such as Kangri in household language practices.

Addressing the Kangri language crisis today is not merely a matter of cultural pride—it is a necessity for preserving linguistic diversity and ensuring that the voices of local communities continue to shape their future. Without immediate steps toward recognition, documentation, parental transmission, and inclusion in formal education, Kangri may soon become a forgotten tongue, echoing only in the memories of the last fluent speakers

4.2 Importance of the study

The Research will develop a **Home Literacy Environment Model** for children aged 3-8yrs in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh which will focus on fostering early language and literacy skills by integrating local dialect, parental engagement strategies, and accessible home-based learning resources.

The study will work towards

a) developing a structured HLE model
b) protecting the Kangri dialect by working on promoting its use in households along with Hindi and English.

5 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

5.1 Theoretical Framework of Language Acquisition in Early Childhood

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, as emphasized by **Mishra** (Mishra, Child devlopment in India: a Psychological Perspective, 2019), underscores the importance of language as a primary tool for thought and social interaction. Vygotsky's concept of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** suggests that children achieve optimal learning outcomes when guided by more knowledgeable individuals within a linguistically familiar environment. Early exposure to the mother tongue provides essential cognitive scaffolding for the development of higher mental functions (Mishra, 2019).

In support of this, **Krashen's Input Hypothesis**, discussed by **Singh** (Singh, Understanding Second Language Aquisition, 2020), argues that language acquisition is most effective when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of understanding. In early childhood education, this supports the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction (Singh). **Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis**, as explored by

Bhattacharya and Sharma (Bhattacharya P. &., 2018), adds further depth to this understanding by suggesting that the development of the first language forms the cognitive and linguistic foundation is necessary for acquiring additional languages.

Hymes (Hymes, 1964) introduced the concept of communicative competence, illustrating the deep interconnection between language and society. His structural analysis of language emphasized how multilingual abilities are shaped through cultural and social interactions. **Rieber** (Reiber, 1997), in his edited volume of Vygotsky's collected works, discusses how Vygotsky's theories were initially overlooked, but have since been recontextualized as more applicable within modern multicultural education systems.

Fredenberg and Silverman (2012) offer an interdisciplinary perspective from cognitive science, examining how memory, attention, and perception interact in the language learning process. Supporting this, **Liu** (Liu, 2023) in a cross-cultural study on second language acquisition, explores how positive transfer from the mother tongue can facilitate second language learning.

Finally, UNESCO's advocacy for early mother tongue education, as articulated by **Giannini** (Giannini, 2024), links language not only to cognitive development but also to identity formation and cultural preservation.

5.2. Language Acquisition, Development, and Home Literacy Environment

The development of language skills in early childhood is deeply intertwined with the home literacy environment and parental engagement. One of the most influential contributions to this domain is **Jim Trelease's** *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, which highlights the significance of reading aloud to children. **Trelease** (Trelease, 1985) emphasizes that reading aloud not only enhances vocabulary and listening comprehension but also stimulates creativity and fosters a love for language.

The role of language learning strategies in both formal and informal settings has been discussed in the research by **Crookall and Crookall** (Crookall, 1989).. Their strategies are not confined to academic environments; they also extend to home settings, where caregivers and family members can model and support effective language behaviors.

Further supporting the importance of early literacy practices is the work of **Hamilton** and **Hayisu Thomas** (Hamilton, 2002), who argue that literacy development begins long before formal schooling. Their research explores how foundational literacy skills are shaped by both environmental and genetic factors.

A more empirical insight is provided by **Madigan** which examines the correlation between parenting behaviours and children's language development

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5.3. Educational Psychology and Pedagogical Methods

Ross (Ross, 1933), in *Groundwork of Educational Psychology*, offers foundational insights into the psychological principles underlying learning behaviour, which are directly applicable to multilingual contexts. His exploration of memory, attention, heredity, and mental conflict helps understand how children process and retain multiple languages in early learning environments. **Fox** (Fox, 1950) builds on these themes by addressing memory, habit, and skill formation in *Educational Psychology: Problems and Methods*.

Norlin and Chess (Norlin, 1988) contribute a sociological and ecological perspective to child development in *Human Behaviour and the Social Environment*. They emphasize the critical role of the family, culture, and environment in influencing early language development. Their ecological model supports the argument that a strong home literacy environment—shaped by familial use of mother tongue and regional languages—can significantly influence a child's multilingual capacity.

Bossing's (Bossing, 1966) *Principles of Secondary Education*—though focused on older students—raises curricular questions that are highly relevant to early childhood pedagogy. His inquiries into the curriculum problem, the role of guidance, and limiting factors in school development serve as a valuable foundation when constructing early literacy models that include multiple languages. Similarly, **Kothari** (Kothari D. , 2000) , in *Education and Character Building*, emphasizes the moral and cultural objectives of education.. This aligns with the goals of multilingual literacy, particularly when attempting to preserve endangered languages like Kangri through culturally rooted pedagogy

Adams (Adams, 1938) in *The Evolution of Educational Theory*, discusses the dynamic nature of educational theory, particularly how it should adapt based on successful practice.

Kabir (Kabir, 1956), in *Education in New India*, provides a historical analysis of educational reforms in post-independence India. His work gives context to current challenges in integrating regional and endangered languages into formal and informal education systems.

5.4 Policy and Pedagogical Perspectives on Language Inclusivity

The **Central Advisory Board of Education** (CBSE, 2020) highlighted the importance of linguistic inclusivity as emphasized in India's **National Education Policy (NEP)** and explored the various implementation challenges associated with integrating regional and mother tongues into early education.

Providing a historical perspective on language instruction in India, **Mehta** (Mehta R. , 1950) presents valuable insights into the teaching of English as a foreign language. He advocates for the simultaneous teaching of English and the mother tongue during early childhood when the child's powers of observation, imitation, and habit formation are at their peak.

Mukherjee (Mukherjee, 1969), in his book *Education in India: Today and Tomorrow*, reflects on major educational challenges in India around the time of the 1968 National Policy on Education.

The **Three Language Formula**, (Three language Formula, 2025) as outlined by *Insights on India* (2025), presents both opportunities and controversies in the Indian education system. In a broader perspective, **Khurana** (Khurana, 2023), in *Contemporary India and Education*, explores various challenges in the Indian education system, such as policy formulation, ICT integration, and teacher training

Further supporting this viewpoint, **UNICEF** (UNICEF, 2021)**and UNESCO** (UNESCO, Learning in mother tongue, 2021) advocate for culturally relevant instruction in mother tongues. Their findings assert that children learn best when taught in a language they understand, especially in the early years, and that mother tongue-based education fosters stronger cognitive, academic, and social development.

5.5 Regional and Cultural Context: Himachal Pradesh & Kangra

Understanding the demographic and linguistic landscape of Kangra is essential for developing an effective home literacy environment (HLE) model. According to the **Census of India** (Commissioner, 2022), Himachal Pradesh has a significant rural population with notable linguistic diversity, especially in districts like Kangra, which is home to multiple local dialects including Kangri.. The **LangLex Language Profile** (Langlex, Retrieved 2025) for Himachal Pradesh reveals that languages like Kangri, Pahari, and other local variants continue to be spoken in the home environment. But there is an increasing influence of Hindi and English in formal education.

The **Himachal Pradesh Demographic Profile** by the **National Health Mission** (NHM) offers insights into literacy rates, child population data (ages 3–8), and health indicators that indirectly influence educational access and outcomes. The **Kangra District Profile** (Wikipedia, Kangra district Profile)further elaborates on the region's geography, cultural practices, and linguistic traditions..Additionally, general background information from **Britannica** (Britannica)

and **Wikipedia** (Wikipedia, Himachal Pradesh) provides a historical overview of the linguistic evolution in Himachal Pradesh..

5.6 Global Trends and Endangered Languages

The global crisis of language extinction has prompted renewed attention to the protection of regional and indigenous languages. According to **UNESCO** (UNESCO, List of endangered languages, 2021), India is home to hundreds of vulnerable and endangered languages, including several spoken in Himachal Pradesh. The **Visual Capitalist Endangered Languages Map** (Visual, 2021) provides a compelling global visualization of at-risk languages, illustrating how sociopolitical, economic, and educational pressures contribute to language shift. India appears prominently on this map, indicating the magnitude of the challenge. Supplementary insights from **Wikipedia** (Wikipedia, Extinct Languages, n.d.) on extinct languages offer contextual understanding of the patterns and consequences of language loss worldwide.

5.7 Instructional Design and Learning Strategies

Effective second language acquisition within multilingual contexts requires a nuanced understanding of both pedagogy and the broader educational environment. **Chastain** (Chastain, 1976) provides a foundational framework for teaching second languages, emphasizing individualized instruction, environmental influences, and the importance of integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing into classroom practices. His work serves as a guide for structuring multilingual instruction tailored to diverse learner needs, which is central to developing a Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model. **Shekhar and Sundrarajan** (Shekhar, 2006) highlight the importance of empirical evaluation in education. Their work illustrates how educational interventions can be measured effectively through robust research design, making it particularly useful for assessing multilingual literacy programs. **Agarwal** (Agarwal, 1975) offers a structured approach to educational research, detailing methods for hypothesis formulation, data collection, and statistical analysis. This is further enriched by **Pramanik and Maity** (Pramanik, 2019), who provide a comprehensive question bank for research methodology, assisting in refining the evaluative framework of this study. From an administrative standpoint, **Pavate** (Pavate, 1964) presents an insider's view of India's evolving education system.

5.8 Early Language Development and the Home Environment

The roots of language acquisition extend far beyond early childhood interactions and can be traced to prenatal experiences. **Chopra, Simon, and Abrams** (Chopra, 2005) emphasize that the sensory experiences of the foetus—such as hearing, touch, and sight in the womb—play a formative role in shaping early development. Extending into postnatal contexts, **Wellwood** (Wellwood, 1997) underscores the value of a well-organized and nurturing home atmosphere. Her guidance for mothers on simplifying and structuring daily life highlights the importance of parental engagement and routine in fostering a literacy-rich environment.

5.9 Home Literacy Environment (HLE) Model

Sénéchal and LeFevre's Home Literacy Model distinguishes between formal, code-related activities—such as teaching letters, decoding, and writing—and informal, meaning-related activities such as shared reading, storytelling, and family discussions (Senechal M. & LeFevere, 2002). When adapted to multilingual contexts, formal tasks may be undertaken separately in L1, L2, and L3, while meaning-related practices can incorporate a blend of languages, thereby facilitating cross-linguistic transfer.

Heath's Literacy as Social Practice Model extends this perspective by emphasizing that literacy is deeply embedded in cultural norms, social interactions, and community contexts rather than confined to skill-based training (Heath, 1983) (Heath, Words at work and play: Three decades in Family and community life, 2012). In multilingual homes, this highlights the importance of recognising community traditions, oral practices, and festivals as authentic literacy experiences, while also positioning caregivers as co-learners alongside children.

Hornberger's Biliteracy Continua Model conceptualises literacy development along continua such as oral–written, L1–L2/L3, and receptive–productive domains (Hornberger, 2004). This model underscores the need to map children's proficiencies across multiple languages and gradually scaffold them towards higher literacy competencies through structured home-based activities. Similarly, **Whitehurst and Lonigan's** Emergent Literacy Framework differentiates between inside-out skills (e.g., phonological awareness and decoding) and outside in skills (e.g., vocabulary and narrative comprehension) (Whitehurst, 1988). Within a multilingual HLE, this framework supports the view that foundational code skills are best developed first in the most familiar language, while outside-in skills may be cultivated through cross-linguistic activities such as story retelling and discussions. **García and Wei's** Translanguaging Pedagogical Cycle argue that children naturally draw upon their full linguistic repertoires to make meaning, challenging the artificial separation of languages (Gracia, 2014). For home-based multilingual literacy practices, this suggests allowing flexible language use

during storytelling, project work, and the creation of bilingual or trilingual artefacts such as word walls and family books.

Finally, **Whitehurst's** Dialogic Reading Model positions children as active participants in reading through adult scaffolding and the PEER sequence (Prompt–Evaluate–Expand–Repeat) (Whitehurst G. A., 1998). In multilingual adaptation, the same text may be read in multiple languages, with code-switching employed strategically to build semantic connections across languages.

5.10 Websites

5.10.1. Policy and National Context

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 prioritizes multilingualism and recommends that children be taught in their mother tongue until at least Grade 5, recognizing its critical role in cognitive and social development (Central Advisory Board of Education, 2020). This aligns with UNICEF's emphasis on the mother tongue as a fundamental key to unlocking children's learning potential, especially in early years (UNICEF, 2021).

5.10.2. Conceptual Understanding: Mother Tongue and Multilingualism

Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home, forming a crucial base for cognitive development (Multilingual Parenting, n.d.; Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Distinguishing between bilingualism and multilingualism, MEITS (2022) emphasizes the fluid, dynamic use of multiple languages in different social settings, crucial to understanding language acquisition in the Kangra region.

5.10.3. Importance of Bilingual and Multilingual Education

Bilingual education has been shown to enhance children's cognitive flexibility and cultural awareness. According to UNESCO (UNESCO, Learning in mother tongue, 2021), such educational models allow children to transition smoothly between languages, improving learning outcomes while preserving linguistic heritage.

5.10.4. Endangered Languages and Global Concerns

The loss of languages is alarming globally, with India being one of the most affected countries. Visual Capitalist presents a compelling map showing India's significant number of

endangered languages (Visual, 2021). UNESCO and Universal Translation Services (2021) further provide detailed listings of endangered Indian dialects, including Kangri, a threatened language in Himachal Pradesh.

5.10.5. Regional and Demographic Context – Himachal Pradesh & Kangra District

Demographic data plays a critical role in understanding linguistic diversity in Kangra. According to Census 2011, Kangra is the most populous district in Himachal Pradesh with a rich cultural and linguistic profile (Census of India 2018, Languag:e India, states and Union territories(table C-16), 2018) Government portals and sources like Langlex and Britannica describe the multilingual composition, including the status of Kangri as an endangered language and its usage among rural populations (Langlex, Retrieved 2025) (Britannica)

5.10.6 Local Linguistic and Cultural Mapping – Kangra District

The Kangra district administration and other local bodies provide detailed insights into the linguistic demographics of the region. The official district portal confirms Kangri as a widely spoken dialect, while economic and cultural profiles shed light on the region's traditional and linguistic identity (MSME, 2011) (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2023)These details help contextualize why an HLE model rooted in local language dynamics is vital.

5.10.7. Research and Academic Support

Global scholarly platforms such as JSTAGE provide academic evidence supporting the urgent need to preserve endangered languages. These studies offer foundational justification for designing interventions like the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model proposed in this research (Maher, 2014).

6. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

6.1 Scope of the study

The study aims to develop and introduce a home literacy environment model for parents, of children in their foundational stage (3-8 yrs) that supports multilingualism and it also aims to enhance the use of the native language.

6.2 Significance of the study

The present study is significant because in the absence of a structured, context-sensitive parental intervention, the natural oral transfer of Kangri is weakening, and children are underexposed to purposeful multilingual learning at home. This study aims at creating a scientifically designed, culturally rooted model to foster early trilingual competencies among children aged 3-8 yrs.

7. DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS

7.1 Home Literacy Environment

7.1.1 Conceptual definition

"Home Literacy Environment refers to the availability of reading materials in the home and the frequency of literacy-related interactions between parents and children, such as shared book reading, storytelling, and teaching letters or words."

— *Sénéchal & LeFevre (2002)*, *Journal of Educational Psychology* (Sene, 2002)

“The home literacy environment can be defined as the frequency of shared reading and the number of books in the household, as well as parents’ own reading behavior and their attitudes towards reading.” Niklas, F., & Schneider, W. (Niklas, 2013).

7.1.2 Operational definition

In the context of Kangra district (comprising 15 administrative blocks and 3908 villages), the **Home Literacy Environment (HLE)** refers to the measurable literacy-related conditions and practices that support early language development in children aged 3 to 8 years. Core factors that will determine the HLE will be the availability of literacy materials present at home, parental engagement and practices and language learning support for children aged 3-8 yrs

7.2 Multilingualism

7.2.1 Conceptual definition

"Multilingualism is a source of strength and opportunity for humanity. It reflects the rich cultural diversity of our world and promotes intercultural dialogue, tolerance, and respect."

— *UNESCO, International Mother Language Day Message, 2021*

“Multilingualism refers to the ability of an individual or the coexistence within a society to use more than two languages, whether actively (speaking, writing) or passively (understanding, reading).”
— *Cenoz & Genesee* (Cenoz, 1998)

7.2.2 Operational definition

Multilingualism refers to an individual's functional ability to understand and speak, in Kangri, Hindi and English with varying levels of skills and proficiency. It includes the practical use of these three languages in different contexts such as home, school, and community, and reflects the ability to switch between languages based on social and communicative needs.
It will be assessed through:

1. Language Exposure
2. Child’s ability to comprehend and respond to basic instructions in Kangri, Hindi, and English.
3. Parental attitudes toward each language.

These indicators will be captured through structured observation tools, parent questionnaires, and language mapping interviews across Kangra's 15 blocks and representative villages.

7.3 Endangered languages

7.3.1 Conceptual definition

"An endangered language is one that is at risk of falling out of use as its speakers die out or shift to speaking other languages. A language is considered endangered when it is no longer being learned as a mother tongue by children in the home."
— *UNESCO, Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger (2003)*
"An endangered language is one that is unlikely to survive for the foreseeable future because it is not being transmitted to younger generations, often due to political, economic, or cultural pressures that lead speakers to shift to more dominant languages."
— *Grenoble & Whaley* (Grenoble, 2006)

7.3.2 Operational definition

In District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh , Kangri as an endangered language is experiencing a rapid decline in the number of active speakers, especially among younger generations, and is no longer being transmitted as the primary means of communication within families and

communities and preference being given to Hindi as first language and English as second language. This decline is threatening the language's long-term survival and cultural continuity. as is evident by the loss of '*Tankri'* script once used as the official language for land records now extinct and not in use since 1950

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7.4 Mother tongue

7.4.1 Conceptual definition

"Mother tongue is the language one learns first, the language one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others, the language one knows best, and the language one uses most."

— *Joshua A. Fishman, 1991, Reversing Language Shift**

"Mother tongue is the language that a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where the child lives."
— Skutnabb-Kangas (Skutnabb Kangas, 2000)

7.4.2 Operational definition

In the present study, **mother tongue** refers to the first language predominantly spoken by the child within the home and immediate community environment in the **Kangra district of Himachal; which is Kangri.**. Earlier Kangri was the first language a child learned naturally in the home environment during early childhood. It served as the foundational medium for emotional bonding, cognitive development, and cultural transmission, and played a critical role in facilitating the learning of additional languages within multilingual contexts. Now it is treated as an endangered regional language

7.5 Home Literacy Environment Model (HLE)

7.5.1 Conceptual definition

The HLE model integrates three influential strands of language acquisition theory:

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Krashen's Input Hypothesis.

Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis

7.5.2 Operational definition

Based on the findings of the pilot study with 400 caregivers in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh the researcher will aim at designing a Home Literacy Environment model that will focus on equal exposure to three languages for children ages 3-8 yrs; the mother tongue Kangri, the first language Hindi and the third and foreign language English. The focus will be on nurturing and creating an environment for multilingual skill acquisition through

Rich, meaningful oral exposure in each language tied to real-life contexts.

Repetition, rehearsal, and retrieval practice to anchor vocabulary and syntax.

Child-led oral production (storytelling, role-play) to develop fluency and narrative competence.

The Home Literacy Environment Model (HLE) Intervention

A three month intervention program with 90 caregivers as Experimental group will be formed.The experimental group will be oriented and introduced to a structured HLE model through a 7 days orientation program. Furthermore, the group will be part of a three-month program of progressive reinforcement for enhancing multilingual skills among children aged 3-8yrs through a **TOOL KIT** designed for trilingual exposure in Kangri, Hindi and English.

The tool kit will consist charts focusing on easy language transition through common everyday use words, phrases and sentences. It will contain trilingual story pages, rhyme cards, flash cards for trilingual phonological awareness and vocabulary enrichment. **LMN diary**

8. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the problems of fostering multilingual skills among children aged 3–8 years in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh.
2. To explore the issues for decline in the usage of Kangri as mother tongue.in District Kangra.
3. To examine the role of mother tongue in enhancing multilingual skills in the ag group 3-8 yrs.
4. To study the influence of parental factors on children in acquiring multilingual skills.
5. To develop a Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model for enhancing multilingual skills among children aged 3–8 years.
6. To test the effectiveness of the Home Literacy Environment Model.(HLEM).

.9. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the problems faced by the children age 3-8 years in multilingual skill acquisition ?
2. What are the issues that are leading the Kangri dialect towards being endangered?
3. How does proficiency in mother tongue support early language development in children aged 3-8 yrs.?
4. What are the different language teaching styles that parents use for their children (3-8yrs) in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh
5. How to develop an effective home literacy environment model for enhancing multilingual skills among children in this region?
6. How effective is the proposed Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model in enhancing multilingual skills among children aged 3–8 years?

10. HYPOTHSES

10.1 Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1: There is a significant relationship between socio-cultural, environmental, and instructional factors and the challenges faced by children aged 3–8 years in multilingual skill acquisition

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant decline in the use of Kangri as mother tongue in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh due to lack of intergenerational transmission .and increasing preference to Hindi and English.

Hypothesis 3: Early exposure to the mother tongue positively influences the development of multilingual skills in children aged 3–8 years.

Hypothesis 4: There is an evident and measurable correlation between parental education level, language proficiency, and home language practices and children's multilingual language acquisition.

Hypothesis 5: A structured HLE model can be designed to support and enhance multilingual development among children in multilingual households.

Hypothesis 6: There will be a significant improvement in pretest and post-test vocabulary scores and language skills of children whose parents were introduced to the HLE model.

10.2 Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1 (H_{01}):
There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural, environmental, and instructional factors and the challenges faced by children aged 3–8 years in multilingual skill acquisition.

Null Hypothesis 2 (H_{02}):
There is no significant decline in the use of Kangri as a mother tongue in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh due to lack of intergenerational transmission or increasing preference for Hindi and English.

Null Hypothesis 3 (H_{03}):
Early exposure to the mother tongue does not significantly influence the development of multilingual skills in children aged 3–8 years.

Null Hypothesis 4 (H_{04}):
There is no significant correlation between parental education level, language proficiency, and home language practices and children's multilingual language acquisition.

Null Hypothesis 5 (H_{05}):
A structured Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model cannot significantly support or enhance multilingual development among children in multilingual households.

Null Hypothesis 6 (H_{06}):
There is no significant improvement in pretest and post-test vocabulary scores and language skills of children whose parents were introduced to the HLE model.

11. VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The study tests how parental and environmental factors, along with structured interventions, influence children's multilingual acquisition and the preservation of Kangri dialect.

11.1 Independent Variable

In this study, the independent variables are parental factors (education, literacy level, language proficiency, and home language practices), mother tongue exposure (age of first exposure, frequency, quality), and the intervention programme (HLE Model and Toolkit**).**

11.2 Dependent Variable

The dependent variables are children's multilingual outcomes—measured through vocabulary (Kangri, Hindi, English), narrative competency, and literacy skills. Additionally, attitudes toward Kangri and language-use patterns across generations.

12. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The major aim of the present study is that of developing a Home Literacy environment model for enhancing multilingual skills among children aged 3-8 years: in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh and to study of its effectiveness the researcher is going to propose the following methodological design

12.1Research Design

This study will adopt a Mixed methods approach integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the status, challenges, and interventions related to the use of the Kangri dialect, Hindi and English and the development of a Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model for enhancing multilingual acquisition in early childhood (ages 3–8 years) in Kangra District,

The research will be conducted in the following sequential steps:

Step 1

Survey Method:
A questionnaire-based survey will be conducted with 300 caregivers to collect data corresponding to Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4. This phase will also include interviews and direct observations to supplement quantitative findings with qualitative insights.

Step 2

Product Development Research Model:
Based on the survey findings, an HLE model will be developed, followed by the designing of a tool kit to support multilingual learning practices at home.

Step 3:

Quasi-Experimental Research Design:
A pre-test–post-test single group design will be implemented to assess the effectiveness of the HLE model for enhancing multilingual skills.in children aged 3-8 yrs

Orientation Program: A one-week orientation program with the parents and Focus Group Discussion with teachers in the single experimental group will be conducted to familiarize them with the HLE model and the use of the tool kit.

Intervention Program: A three-month intervention will follow, during which the experimental group will implement the HLE model with the help of the proposed toolkit; at home under periodic monitoring to evaluate its effectiveness.

Step 4:

Data Analysis and Interpretation:
Both quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed to identify patterns, relationships, and significant findings related to multilingual skill enhancement.

Step5

Establishing Effectiveness of the HLE Model:
The outcomes of the intervention will be analysed to determine the overall effectiveness of the HLE model in promoting multilingual acquisition among children.

Step 6

Testing of Hypotheses:
The hypotheses will be tested using appropriate statistical and qualitative analysis techniques. The final stage will synthesize the findings, draw conclusions, and suggest implications for future practice and policy in multilingual education.

12.2 Data Collection and Sampling

12.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data will be collected using the following methods:

A structured questionnaire survey administered to 300 parents (quantitative data).

Direct observations and interviews conducted to gather qualitative insights.

Pre- and post-assessments to measure changes in children's multilingual abilities after a seven-day orientation and a three-month intervention program with parents in the experimental group.

The experimental group will include:

40 parents of children in the Foundational Stage (3–4 years)

40 parents of children in the Symbolic Understanding Stage (5–6 years)

40 parents of children in the Fluency Development Stage (6–8 years**)**

12.2.2: Tools for Primary Data Collection

For the purpose of this study the tools for data collection will include a questionnaire a structured interview schedule, an observation schedule, and pre test–post-test measures for the experimental group

The sampling strategy will be designed to ensure representation from across all 3,908 villages in Kangra District. Villages grouped into blocks, and the sample size will be proportionally distributed according to the number of villages in each of the 15 development blocks in District Kangra to ensure comprehensive geographic representation.

12.2.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data will be obtained through a review and analysis of existing reports, government documents, policy papers, and scholarly literature, including National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, NCERT publications, and other relevant studies on mother tongue usage and multilingual education.

12.3 Tools For Data Interpretation And Analysis

12.3.1 Quantitative Data:

Descriptive statistics: frequency, percentage, mean scores.
Inferential statistics: paired t-tests for pre- and post-assessment comparison of language skills
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12.3.2 Qualitative Data:

Thematic analysis of observations and parent feedback.
Coding and categorization of qualitative responses

13 LIMITATIONS AND THE DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

13.1 Limitations

1. Limited Documented Resources in Kangri:
   While Kangri has rich oral traditions, the absence of a standardized script and limited formal documentation may restrict access to written linguistic resources. However, this also reinforces the urgency and value of the study in preserving oral language practices.
2. Changing Language Practices Among Families:
   The language environment at home may reflect a blend of Kangri, Hindi, and

English, making it challenging to isolate the influence of the mother tongue. This complexity, however, aligns with the study's multilingual focus.

3. Reliance on Self-Reported Data:
   Data collected through surveys and interviews may be influenced by participants' memory, interpretation, or social desirability bias. Triangulation with observational insights and cross-checks will be used to minimize this impact.
4. Scope Limited to One Region:
   The study is focused on Kangra District, and while this provides depth, the findings may not be directly generalizable to all multilingual or tribal regions of India. However, the model developed may serve as a reference for similar contexts.

13.2 Delimitations of the Study

1. Geographical Focus:
   The research is delimited to the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, chosen for its strong cultural and linguistic heritage, especially in the context of Kangri dialect.
2. Age Group Selection:
   The study focuses specifically on children between 3–8 years, a critical period for language acquisition. Other age groups, though relevant, fall outside the scope of this research.
3. Participant Criteria:
   The study includes parents, grandparents, and early childhood educators as key stakeholders. Other potential influencers like peers, media, or school authorities are excluded to maintain a focused lens on the home literacy environment.
4. Language Scope:
   The model emphasizes three languages: mother tongue (Kangri), Hindi, and English. Other regional or foreign languages are not included in this phase of the research.
5. Time Frame and Methodology:
   The study is designed within a defined research period using a mixed-method approach (qualitative + quantitative). Advanced experimental or longitudinal methods are beyond the current scope but may be considered for future research.

14. THE KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION

While numerous studies have examined the role of the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) in fostering early language acquisition, most have concentrated on dominant or widely spoken languages in urban or multicultural contexts. In contrast, Ganesh Devy's *People's Linguistic Survey of India* (PLSI, 2013 (Devy, 2013)) revealed that around 220 Indian languages have become untraceable—an alarming discrepancy from UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, which records only five extinctions since 1950. This stark gap between official documentation and ground realities highlights the urgent need for focused research on endangered languages.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by providing empirical and contextual evidence on endangered languages and also how an enriched Home Literacy Environment can support multilingual acquisition among children (aged 3–8 years) in rural and semi-rural settings, with particular reference to the endangered Kangri language of Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh.

15. CONCLUSION

The present research aspires to make a significant contribution to the field of multilingual skill enhancement by developing a comprehensive Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model tailored for the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. This model seeks not only to preserve and promote the native dialect, often overlooked in mainstream educational discourse, but also to strengthen foundational competencies in Hindi and English. Moreover, it envisions laying the groundwork for the potential revival of the historically significant Tankri script, thus reinforcing linguistic heritage while advancing multilingualism in early childhood education**.**

16. YEAR-WISE RESEARCH PLAN

Year 1: Oct. 2025 – Sept. 2026

Phase I: Theoretical Foundation and Literature Review

Phase II: Designing Research Tools and Sampling

1. Development and validation of **questionnaires, observation checklists, and interview guides**
2. Designing tools for various respondent subgroups (mothers, fathers, grandparents, teachers)
3. **Sample selection of 300 participants** using lottery sampling

Year 2: Oct. 2026 – Sept. 2027

Phase III: Data Collection

1. Fieldwork: Administration of **questionnaires** and conducting **informal interviews**
2. **Observation of family practices**: storytelling, lullabies, conversations in mother tongue
3. Analysis of parental attitudes towards **language learning, cognitive skills, identity, and multilingualism**
4. Documentation of **language learning patterns in Himachal Pradesh** homes

Phase IV: Data Analysis

1. Coding of data
2. **Quantitative analysis** using SPSS
3. **Qualitative thematic analysis** using NVivo
4. Interpretation of findings

Year 3: Oct. 2027 – Sept.2028

Phase V: Development of Parental Module for enhancing multilingual skill acquisition among children aged 3-8 yrs.

1. Module design based on findings from Phases III & IV
2. Themes to include: teaching mother tongue at home, integrating Hindi/English, oral tradition, language through play
3. Consultation with experts and language education specialists
4. Revision of module post feedback

Phase VI: Implementation and Evaluation of Model

1. 120 care givers from original sample (randomly selected; single group)
2. Pre- and post-assessment of children's multilingual interaction and parental practices
3. Documentation of module effectiveness through observation and feedback
4. Analysis of behavioral change and improvement in home language environment

Phase VII: Thesis Writing and Final Submission

17 CHAPTER SCHEME

Chapter 1:Introduction.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Chapter 3:Review of Literature

Chapter 4.Research Methodology

Chapter 5:Home Literacy Environment for Multilingual Skill Acquisition

Chapter 6:Data Collection and Interpretation.

Chapter 7:Findings, Recommendations, Suggestions and Conclusion

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- **Annexure 1**
- **Table 4:**
- *Objective-wise Research Methodology*

S. No.	Research Objective	Hypotheses	Method	Variables	Data Collection	Population	Tools
1	To study the problems of fostering multilingual skills among children aged 3–8 years in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh.	There is a significant relationship between socio-cultural, environmental, and instructional factors and the challenges faced by children aged 3–8 years in multilingual skill acquisition	Mixed Method Approach	Independent: Parental factors Dependent: Language Proficiency Scores of children aged 3–8 years.	Simple Random Sampling (*lottery method*) Surveys, structured interviews, and observation of children in home settings	300 caregivers from 15 blocks (3908 villages) of Kangra District	Questionnaire, interviews, and observations
2	To explore the issues for decline in the usage of Kangri as mother tongue.in District Kangra	There is a significant decline in the use of Kangri as mother tongue in District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh due to lack of intergenerational transmission .and increasing preference to Hindi and English.	Mixed Method Approach	Independent: Level of HLE (Low, Medium, High) Dependent: Multilingual Proficiency Score	Quantitative data derived from survey (Objective 1); Analytical study of secondary data	Same as Objective 1	Questionnaire, language assessment tests, observations, parental interviews
3	To study the influence of parental factors on children's multilingual acquisition.	H3: Parental education level, language proficiency, and home language practices significantly affect children's multilingual acquisition.	Socio-demographic survey (Pilot from Objective 1); Correlational analysis	Independent: Parental Literacy & Involvement Score Dependent: Child's Multilingual Development	Quantitative: Correlational data; Qualitative: Interviews	Same as Objective 1	Parental literacy scales, child language assessment, semi-structured parental interviews
4	To develop a Home Literacy Environment (HLE) model to develop multilingual skills in children aged 3–8 years.	H4: A structured HLE model can be designed to support and enhance multilingual skill development among children.	Design-Based Research approach based on data collected from Objective 1	Independent: Parental Orientation Dependent: Home Language Practice Score	Quantitative: Findings from pilot study; Qualitative: Observation notes, parental feedback sessions	Data analysis and interpretation from Objectives 1–3	Feedback from caregivers; collaboration with language analysts
5	To test the effectiveness of the HLE model and evaluate its impact on children's language skills.	H5: Implementation of the HLE model leads to a measurable improvement in multilingual language skills of children aged 3–8 years.	Quasi-Experimental design Single group Pre/Post testing	Independent: Orientation Single Group Dependent: Child's Multilingual Skill Scores (Pre/Post)	Quantitative: Pre/Post multilingual assessments; Qualitative: Parent feedback interviews	Single Group 120 caregivers	Re-administering HLE model; pre/post proficiency tests

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